

## Parental Education for Children's L2 Performance: An Impact Analysis

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*Various studies in the field of parental influence on children's educational success have confirmed that the parental, familial and surrounding environment of a learner affects his overall educational success. In this connection, this study intends to look into whether there is any corresponding relation between the level of parental education and their children's academic performance in second language. To achieve such objective, data have been collected from secondary level students who belong to various family backgrounds. The data analysis finds that parental education has a positive contribution to their children's second language performance. On the contrary, parents' lower education level has a negative impact on their children's second language performance.*

**Keywords:** Level of parental education; Academic performance in English; L2-second language; Positive contribution; Negative impact.

**Field of Research:** Social Science (Sociolinguistics)

### 1. Introduction

It has been found from various second language acquisition research works that L2 learners' learning success shows a discrepancy on a number of dimensions. Some SLA studies in 1970s often marked some distinctive factors of successful learners. In this respect, the explanation of Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) is noteworthy for differential success among the L2 learners. They have identified some variables – age, aptitude, socio-psychological factors, personality, cognitive style, and hemisphere specialization, learning strategies and some other factors. Research has also been carried out on the other related variables also, such as learners' family setting, social class and the level of parental education etc. So, it is worth mentioning that students' social background, ethnic identity, family environment etc. may affect their learning and performance in second language (Rashid 2013). Family has been considered to be a social institution since the development of our civilization. Therefore, we cannot ignore the direct and indirect influence of family on us. Abigali and Ifeoma (2013) opine about the sphere of influence of family saying that the domain of family background is very large because family background is a collective terminology comprising of social class/status, family size, family structure, the level of parental education, occupation and other factors pertaining to family life.

It is known that parents are thought to be the center of a family and therefore, social background of a student is measured according to the level of parental qualification, status, etc. With this conception in focus, the motivation of this study is Bangladeshi parents and their children's academic performance in English at the secondary level

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## Rashid

Of education. In this study it is marked that the previous research findings and literatures do not exhibit the actual level of parental educational influence on children's overall performance in English, rather the studies moderately focused either on educational success in general or on particular skills in L2 learning.

Therefore, it is clearly evident that there is a research gap and to mitigate this gap a rigorous research is yet to be attempted. To fill up the knowledge gap left out by the previous researches, the present study investigates the research question: "Is there any impact of parental educational success on academic performance in English of their children?"

The research finding of this study is novel because unlike the previous major studies in this field (Triventi 2011; Carneiro et al. 2013; Gonzalez et al. 2017; Wigfield et al. 2006; Hamid and Baldauf 2008; McLachlan et al. 2013; Kyriacou and Zhu 2008, Meir 2004; Han 2007; Byrner and Gelman 1991; Easter brooks and Baker 2002; Gardner 1985), it has complied the total involvement of parents in L2 learning and performance of children.

As the study focuses on the unequal performance of Bangladeshi students in English at secondary level education and the focus is on the level of parental education to establish a correspondence between the two factors - the level of parental education and students' academic performance in L2, the outcome of this study will therefore find an answer to the popular question of the country (Bangladesh) why the performances of different students vary even though they follow the same curriculum and appear at the same academic examination. In addition, this study will encourage the English teaching community to pay more attention to those students who grow up under the care of such parents who have poor educational background.

To facilitate the task of meanings of the level of parental education, each academic degree of parents is marked with 1 point (for example if the highest academic degrees of the father and the mother of a student are MA and HSC respectively then the father's one is marked as follows - SSC+HSC+BA+MA= 1+1+1+1=4 and the mother's one is - SSC+HSC= 1+1=2; therefore, the level of parental education of this student is estimated at 6 (4+2) in total. And in this paper academic performance of participants is discerned from the academic score (GPA) of English obtained by them in SSC (Secondary School Certificate Examination) as the criteria of students' performance in English. Here better or lower performance has been considered comparing students' English GPA with their overall CGPA (Cumulative Grade Point Average); for example a student's performance in English has been considered 'better' because his/her GPA in English is found equal to or higher than his/her overall CGPA. On the other hand, a student's performance in English has been measured 'poor' when his/her GPA in English is found lower than his/her overall CGPA.

The study is organized into sections, introduction section deals with the relevance of research question, objectives and scope of study, the Literature Review section provides a summery review of relevant literatures, the Methodology section explains how the study is conducted and finally the paper presents the findings of the study followed by Conclusion section.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Parental Influence on Children's Overall Educational Success

There is no denying the fact that parental education significantly influences the present and future educational career and success of a student. In this field, Black and Devereux (2011) reviewed a considerable literatures focus on the effects of parental background on outcomes for their children such as cognitive skills, education, health and subsequent income. Triventi's (2011) study hypothesizes that in most countries; parental education is positively related to the graduation in top institutions and prestigious field of study. Similar implication of parental education is found in the study of Chen (2009) who posits that education is the key determinant of students' achievement. He mentions that it is primarily because of children's innate ability and parental ability which are generally interlinked and thus children's innate ability is also possibly correlated with parental education. In relation to this, he also asserts that better educated parents are more likely to place high values on child education and more capable and also more willing to help their children. And it is expected that such placement of high values and help will have a positive impact on students' educational career. In some cases, individual (maternal or paternal) education is also a matter of variable. Carneiro et al. (2013) find that maternal education has positive impacts both on cognitive skills and behavioral problems of children, but the latter are more sustained than the former. In this regard, the study of Gonzalez et al. (2017) is also mentionable, in their study correlations are moderate and positive, with higher levels of maternal education are related to family income, home literacy environment (HLE), book availability, and children's expressive and receptive vocabulary. Other than such factors, parental influence on academic achievement is extensively related to various direct and indirect associations of a student. In this field Wigfield et al. (2006) identified four influential parental factors-a. Parental, familial and neighborhood characteristics, b. parents' general belief and behaviors, c. parents' child- specific beliefs and d. parents'-specific behaviors. Here, parental, familial and neighborhood characteristics refer to the level of parental education, career, income, family size and cultural tradition. Parents' general belief and behaviors include their child rearing concept and parenting styles etc. The parents' child- specific beliefs refer to the parents' beliefs about their children's abilities and expectations for their success; and parents'- specific behaviors comprise the amount of time spent with the child, teaching strategies and career guidance. According to Wigfield et al. (2006) all the four factors interact with each other. In addition, parental involvement in the academic achievement of children is directly and indirectly related to the financial investment. For example, the marginal benefits from investing in children's education may be positively related with the household income, because richer parents can afford educational inputs of higher quality (Behrman and James 1999). This point, investment in education by parents is an undeniable reality in Bangladesh. Ahmed and Bose (2005), cited in Hamid and Baldauf (2008) have rightly identified this reality and pointed out that the large proportion of secondary students in rural Bangladesh is either poor or disadvantaged and their families cannot afford to make requisite investment in their education, and such socio-economic realities considerably influence the academic performance of children. Similar socio-economic realities in determining students' performances in English have been delineated in a newspaper report entitled: 'Poor students lag behind as good result depends on private tutors'. In the report, Deabanath (2007) says quoting educationists that capitalism has engulfed the country's education

## Rashid

system where students backed by solvent families are achieving glorious result while students from poor families are failing to obtain even pass marks as schools fail to provide quality education to them. In addition, involvement of parental education is seen in the study of McLachlan et al. (2013). The study found that parents may affect the behavior and decisions taken by their children through genetic transmission, preferences, or/and environment – put simply, more educated and richer parents can provide a 'better' environment for their children, which creates an inequity which is the focus of sizable policy attention.

### 2.2 Parental Involvement in Learning L2

Many educationists believe that success in overall education can influence the success in ESL/ ELT learning. In both cases, the education of parents can play an instrumental role. Kyriacou and Zhu (2008), find a strong parental involvement in their children's English education. Accordingly, in the case of immigrant students who learn English as their second language(ESL) in host countries, studies generally have found that students' socio-economic status is typically measured by parental income, educational background and/or occupation, and these are associated with the students' academic English development and achievement at school(Carhill, Suarez-Orozco, and Paez 2008; Entwisle and Anstone 1994; Fernandez and Nielson 1986; Hakuta, Butler and Witt 2000; Hampton, Ekboir and Rochin 1995; Suarez-Orozco and Todorva 2008; cited in Butler2013).Regarding family influence which is a related terminology of parental influence, Meir (2004) states that 'family can provide us with valuable knowledge to tailor and adapt the literacy curriculum to incorporate particular culture and linguistic traditions and expectations for their children's literacy development. Han (2007)in the same line opines that parents are no longer mere observers regarding their children's literacy. They actively take part in various activities to promote their children's literacy long before formal instruction starts. Han (2007) discovers that family influence on children's literacy has different effects depending on parental perspectives on English, their own experiences with literacy, the level of parental education and career, and the social environments where English is used by the children. In this connection, the opinion of Byrner and Gelman (1991)is worth mentioning. They say that parental input serves as data that encourage development and provides scaffolding for the child's construction of appropriate linguistic forms.

Easterbrooks and Baker (2002) propose that communication is learnt and shared within the cultural context of the family, and that it will not develop normally without their pragmatic and social context in place. In their paper they have also stated that successful children come from committed parents. That means family is an integral part of language development and as the parents are the center of a family, they can contribute much in this regard.

Language learning strategy is a significant factor in overall L2 development. Mediating agents or significant others, including teachers, classmates, celebrities, family members, friends, electronic media, social media or print materials, from whom language learners try to find support for their language learning process, often have an impact on learners' strategy use(Gao 2006). This point may be illustrated with the comment that these mediating agents directly or indirectly help out learners to implement certain strategies (Oxford 2003).In this connection, Gardner(1985) has identified two important roles of parents in their children's L2

## Rashid

learning process which are known as both active and passive roles. And he asserts that both active and passive roles affect the improvement of attitudes and motivation in the child that can manipulate L2 acquisition (Gardner 1985). He explains that when parents encourage and support their children in learning L2 and monitor their learning then it is called active role. On the other hand, passive role entails parent's aptitude and attitudes towards the L2 community. Here, the point of parental level of education is a major factor, as it is known that highly educated parents have the possibility of playing both active and passive role more successfully than less educated parents. The issue of active support and help of educated parents in learning L2 have been corroborated in the study of Asgari and Mustapha (2011) also. In their study, most of the participants stated that their parents were their first teachers who had helped them in having primary knowledge about L2, providing good facilities either at home or in school to improve their vocabulary, reading and speaking. In some cases individual skill developing involvement has also been found. The study of Butler (2013) finds that while the parents' socioeconomic status (SES) does not show much effect on their children's listening and reading/writing performance during their elementary school years, it indicates an effect on their speaking abilities at the fourth-grade level, if not earlier. Their study has also guided us towards the fact that different parents have different perspectives on learning of the English language because of their level of education. So, it can be deduced from the above literatures that parental overall education, career, attitude and experience of learning L2, etc. have direct and indirect influence on the L2 learning of their children.

The above review of literature emphasizes to find relevant answer to the set research question. On the basis of this research question, the following hypotheses have been set:

**H<sub>0</sub>**: Parental education has no effect on children's performance in English.

**H<sub>a</sub>**: Parental education has overall effect on children's performance in English.

**H<sub>01</sub>**: Children's performance in English does not vary according to the level of parental education.

**H<sub>a1</sub>**: Children's performance in English varies according to the level of parental education.

### 3. Methodology of the Study

As this study aims to probe into the correlation between the level of parental education and academic performance in English at secondary level students in Bangladesh, here multi-level analysis is needed. Therefore, mixed methods including both qualitative and quantitative approaches have been followed in collecting the data relating to the subject matter of this study. According to Dornyei (2007) mixed methods are particularly appropriate for such research (where multi-level analysis needed because it allows investigators to obtain data about both the individual and the broader social context).

To conduct the study data have been collected in the year 2016 from 98 respondents through convenience sampling methods since no officially published complete students list or database was found available from the respective institutions. Moreover, some of the samples were found non-responsive.

## Rashid

The respondents of this study were randomly chosen from both public and private institutions situated in urban and rural settings and the respondents of this study came from different social and family background (Higher secondary level students who completed SSC examination in 2015 under Chittagong Education Board). In this study the instrument used for the collection of data is a written questionnaire. Since the earlier studies did not solely focus on the topic of the current research, relevant variables were not available in any particular past study which could be considered as an ideal work for further study. Hence, 7 (seven) common variables were chosen from various studies and brought into the current study to find concrete implications. In this study (seven) independent variables namely: participants i) fathers' educational qualification ii) fathers' profession iii) mothers' educational qualification iv) mothers' profession v) fathers' monthly family income) mothers' monthly family income and vi) the main helping person in learning English on 1 (one) dependent variable namely academic performance in English (i.e., GPA in English) of the participants. Since the rule of thumbs in selecting the sample is 1:7 which means 7 samples of each variable, the size of the sample chosen in the current study is adequate because total 98 respondents were chosen for 7 (seven) independent variables. So, the ratio of independent variables (7) and samples (i.e., 98 respondents) is 1: 14 which fulfills and exceeds the requirements of sample. Hence, the sampling adequacy is justified. In the questionnaire, demographic and guided questions were included. After the collection of data the researcher has categorized them according to the level of parental education and matched and compared them to establish a correlation between the level of parental education and students' performance at secondary level compulsory English.

### 4. Data Analysis, Discussion and Findings

After having the data from the respondents, the data forms have been arranged into nine categories according to the educational levels of parental education of the respondents. Here, the levels of parental education have been named as level-0, level-1, level-2, level-3, level-4, level-5, level-6, level-7 and level-8. For the convenience of data analysis, the levels of parental education have been kept into the main focus and the performance of the students has been measured and compared with different levels. In this regard, the performance of the students has been named, group-P, for poor performance (whose English GPA is lower than their overall CGPA) and group-H, for higher performance (whose GPA in English is higher than or equal to their overall CGPA). Here two bar charts have also been used to demonstrate the real picture of the dissimilar performances of two different groups, group-P & group-H.

In the data forms, a total of 16 respondents have been found whose parental education level is equal to level-0. In this group, most of the parents are illiterate and male members are mostly farmers while female members are house-wives. Here, the proportion of performance of group-H and group-P is 6:94 that means in this level only 6% students have got higher GPA and 94% students have obtained lower GPA in English than their overall CGPA. In level-1 and level-3, the performance of group-H and group-P are found to be 50:50; that means students belonging to such levels have showed an average performance where better and poor performances are equivalent. But in level -2, the ratio of group-H and group-P is recognized as 38:62, which implies that in this level, 38% students have acquired higher GPA and 62% have achieved lower GPA in English than their total CGPA. However, the better

## Rashid

performance rate starts increasing in the parental education level-4, where higher and poor performance rate is 53:47. This upward trend of better performance in English grows more in the next level-5, where the ratio of group-H and group-P is 71:29 and such attaining better performance have been marked in the level-6, level-7 and level -8 also , where the ratios are 73:27; 80:20 and 98:2 respectively.

There may be several explanations for such poor or higher performances of the two groups of students. However, the current discussion will be limited to the key points incorporating that have been asked to the students while collecting data. The respondents have been asked about their parents' education, profession, family income, and about the facilities and scope of learning second language. Therefore, this discussion will be guided by these particular points. In the first four levels (level-0, level-1, level-2 and level-3), it is found that fathers of the respondents are mostly farmers, day laborers and shop keepers while the mothers of them are mainly housewives. Inversely, in the other levels (level-4, level-5, level-6, level-7 and level -8), fathers are mostly service holders and businessmen. However, in this group a significant number of mothers are housewives as in the previous four levels. Related to this point the comment of Evans, et al. (2010) is mentionable that it is as great an advantage as having university education rather than unschooled parents, and twice the advantage of having a professional rather than unskilled father. This point may be illustrated with an argument of Rashid (2013) states that as language learning is somehow related to the habit formation; therefore, if parents are highly educated and professional, then of course, children would get direct and indirect benefit of it. Generally children follow and imitate their parents. So it is expected that children will be positively motivated in learning L2 if they find that their parents who are professional are using L2 with them as well as in their professional environments. There is a rationale that the environment of a house is associated with the profession of parents. If parents are highly educated and professional then the family environment, communication and language use etc. become more refined than the other group where parents are less educated and professional. It is known that parental profession correlates with the social class of students and there is evidence of relationship between social class and L2 achievement. Ellis (1994) mentions his general finding about L2 achievement that children from lower socio-economic group are less successful than those from higher group. Here, the findings of the study can be related with this point including one explanation why the poor performance group has got lower GPA in academic English than their opposite group. The explanation exhibits that the parents of group-H are highly educated and of better professions and this is why students of this group have enjoyed more facilities, support, direct and indirect help and guidance from their professional parents and this is the plausible reason for their achieving higher GPA.

In the collected data, it is marked that there is a huge gap in the family income of these two groups. In the group-P, the average monthly income is Tk. 8000 whereas the average monthly income of group-H is Tk. 20,000. Hamid and Baldeuf (2008) find in their survey that different levels of family income make differences in 10<sup>th</sup> grade students' mean results in language proficiency test and SSC examination in Bangladesh and also showed that students whose family income has higher income levels obtained significantly ( $p > 0.001$ ) higher scores/better grades. Here, the findings of the study can be underscored with the presupposition that financial condition of a family plays a significant role in achieving higher or lower scores. This is a fact in Bangladesh where academic education is unfortunately private teacher

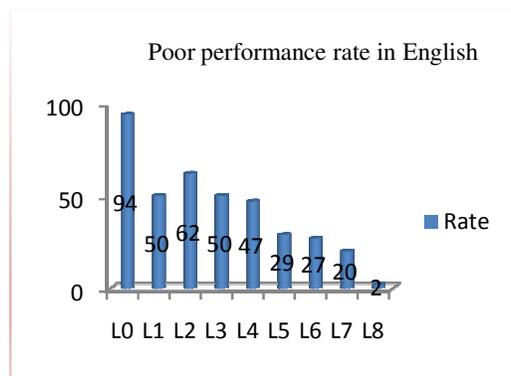
## Rashid

and coaching center dependent. Almost all parents send their children to private teachers or coaching centers as a supplement to institutional education. This tendency of dependency on private tuition and coaching centre tuition is more prevalent in dealing with compulsory English at secondary level. Therefore, here financial ability of a family is the prerequisite for investment in private tuition. It is common that financially solvent families invest more money than their counter parts. In this study, perhaps this common hypothesis of investing more money by well off families might be true as it is found that the family income of group-H is much more than the opposite group.

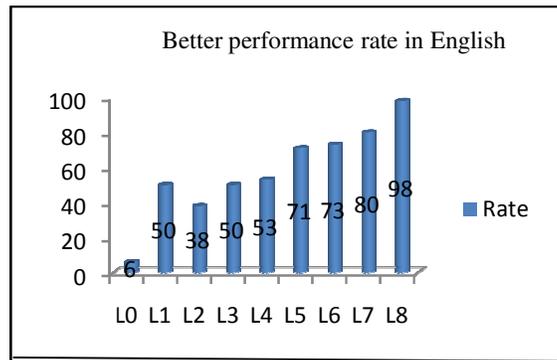
Another remarkable difference is marked between the two groups of students when focus has been given on their answers to the question no. 7 of the questionnaire which asks the students who helped them much in learning English. There were several options: a. Parents b. Other family members c. School teachers d. Private teachers. Here it has been found that in the better performance group 35% students have admitted that the ira. parents helped them , 25% said b. other family members , 30% answer c. school teacher and 10% mentioned the option d. private teacher. That means 60% (35+25=60) students of group-H have got active help from their family members. On the contrary, in the group-P total 43% students have acknowledged the help of family member while 57% of them relied on the help of school and private teachers. Such findings indicate that when family members are actively involved in the process of learning L2 then the performance of students improves remarkably. And such active contribution of the family is possible in L2 learning when the level of parental education is high.

For a clear representation of the variegated performances of the two groups - group-H and group-P; below, two bar charts have been designed according to the findings.

**Figure1: Bar Chart Shows the Performance of Group-P, in English According to the Parental Level of Education**



**Figure 2: Bar Chart Shows the Performance of Group-H, in English According to the Parental Level of Education**



In Fig. 1, students' average poor performance rate is 64%  $\{(94+50+62+50)/4=64\}$  that means poor performance rates are high in case of such students whose parental education level is poor, below the level 4 (0-4)). On the contrary, the second bar chart, Fig. 2 confirms that higher performance rate is more in case of such students whose parental education level is greater than 4 (4-8). The average better performance rate of this group is 75 %  $\{(53+71+73+80+98)/5= 75\}$  that means the children from highly educated parents performed better in L2 learning and performance.

Therefore, the results of poor performance group- P, in Fig. 1 is 64% and the rate of better performance group – H, in Fig. 2 is 75% which altogether reject the null hypotheses  $H_0$ : Parental education has no effect on children's performance in English and  $H_{01}$ : Children's performance in English does not vary according to the level of parental education and accept the two alternative hypotheses : $H_a$ : Parental education has overall effect on children's performance in English and  $H_{a1}$ : Children's performance in English varies according to the level of parental education sustain.

Thus, the statistical analytical findings of this study clearly demonstrate that secondary level students achieve better GPA in their academic exams provided that their parents' level of education is high. On the contrary, the counter group obtains lower GPA in academic exams as the level of their parents' education is low. And the success and failure rate varies according to the level of students' parental education.

## 5. Conclusion

Response: not complied. What you need to provide is: How your results/findings are different from those results/findings reported by the authors you mentioned in literature review section should be provided. There is no scope of denying the influence of parental factors on L2 acquisition. In this connection the findings of this paper is significant as it will create further scope of research in the field. The finding of this study is different from the other researches mentioned in the literature review section in the way that the previous studies the researchers only concentrated on parental issues and particular areas of L2 learning ( i.e. vocabulary learning, speaking etc.); whereas this study has directly linked parental level of education with children's overall L2 acquisition. Hence, the significance and timeliness of this study lies in the prospect that the study will stimulate the consciousness of the policy

makers, parents, school authority and English teachers about the fact that children's L2 acquisition and performance are influenced by their parental education and family environment, therefore, like other extra linguistic factors the issue of parental education and family environment should be taken under consideration while policy making in L2 teaching to the children.

This paper is an attempt to dig deep into such issues that are related to children's L2 learning though it is limited to small sample size from a limited area. Therefore to investigate actual fact, future studies with larger sample size from different areas and inclusion of respondents' explanation regarding their L2 learning and parental influence is needed.

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## Rashid

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# Rashid

## Appendices

### Students' Questionnaire [Students will fill in /give ✓ this data form]

1. Name (optional) :
2. Name of the High school :
3. Total CGPA obtained in SSC :
4. GPA obtained in SSC English :
5. Father's Information:

Educational Qualification (Highest academic degree he has obtained)	Profession	Monthly income (Tk.)

6. Mother's information

:

Educational Qualification (Highest academic degree she has obtained)	Profession	Monthly income (Tk.)

7. Who helped you much in learning English?

a. Parents b. Other family members c. School teachers d. Private teachers